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Ex-official wants P.G. voters to control pay

By KELLY NIX

LESS THAN a year after the Pacific Grove City Council gave itself a 130 percent raise, a former elected official has proposed making changes to the city's charter that would require voter approval of compensation and health benefits for council members.

On Tuesday, Luke Coletti filed a ballot initiative to amend Pacific Grove's charter — essentially, its constitution — which can be done per state law by a vote of the electorate. The idea of the amendment is to place authority for pay raises and benefits in the hands of voters, not the city council.

"The purpose of this initiative charter amendment for accountability, oversight, and transparency is to require voter approval of compensation and benefits for the mayor and the council members," according to the eight-page document.

'Not transparent'

Coletti's move comes after the P.G. City Council in May 2025 gave itself the raise — after rejecting requests to allow voters to decide — and considered giving itself medical coverage, both of which drew significant opposition from residents. In response, Coletti's group, Transparent Pacific Grove, led a successful referendum effort, collecting about 1,800 signatures, which allowed residents to decide on the increase. In August 2025, though, the council nixed the raise instead of allowing citizens to vote on it.

"The city council repealed its 130 percent pay raise to dodge voter oversight and accountability, which is not very transparent," Coletti told The Pine Cone this week.

Council members sought to increase their monthly stipends from \$420 to \$966 and from \$700 to \$1,610 for the mayor, which would have cost taxpayers about \$50,000 annually, and more with benefits. Members Lori McDonnell and Paul Walkingstick voted against the pay hike, which was facing overwhelming opposition from the public.

Mayor Nick Smith declined to comment on Coletti's initiative.

Once and for all

Supporters of the raise argued that increasing the stipend was necessary since it had been the same for about two decades, and that increasing it could encourage more people, including younger people, to run for office.

See VOTERS page 27A

Correction

Last week's story, "P.G. official fined for late filing," mischaracterized a March 19, 2025, Pacific Grove City Council vote. On that day councilwoman Tina Rau and three of her council colleagues — who were in favor of increasing the entertainment noise threshold downtown — directed the city attorney to return to the council with an ordinance to modify the Pacific Grove Municipal Code as it pertains to sound amplification.

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TOP*From page 8A*

Carmel high schoolers who may opt to graduate straight into the workforce. Half of students who tried their hand at technical classes — among them engineering and architecture, auto mechanics, digital design, and biotechnology “pathways” offered by CUSD — went on to complete those courses of study, Glenn told board members. Those technical and vocational classes are offered both at Carmel High and Carmel Valley High, and the latter will add a dual-enrollment course in agriculture and natural resources next year.

VOTERS*From page 14A*

On the same day council members voted to increase their pay, they OK'd a motion to defer a decision on health benefits, which left open the possibility they could eventually offer themselves the perk.

“The public record shows that I have consistently opposed allowing the city council to increase its own compensation or benefits, stating this position before, during, and after serving on the council,” Coletti said. “Despite this longstanding

“We're also collecting some testimonials from students, and that's how we're finding out about the entrepreneurial side of things. Some students would really like to have their own business, and start that work,” Glenn said of the district's efforts to expand its job-readiness program.

At the same meeting, the district shared School Accountability Report Cards for each of the district's six schools. These assessments also derive from the Department of Education, which reports that Carmel's elementary, middle, and high school students are performing significantly above the average in California where, across the state, fewer than half of students are passing basic literacy tests, and just over a third make the grade in math.

and unchanged position, the issue has repeatedly resurfaced. The proposed city charter amendment is intended to put this matter to rest permanently by removing the authority from the council and placing it with the voters.”

He filed a notice of intent with the city clerk, which included written text of the amendment, including its purpose, effect and findings. The proposal, he said, would be on the ballot.

If P.G. voters approve the initiative, which requires a simple majority, it will be filed with the California Secretary of State and recorded with Monterey County and become effective.

Souper Saturday fundraiser

PINE CONE STAFF REPORT

COMMUNITY HUMAN Services and Gathering for Women will host Souper Saturday on Feb. 7 to raise funds for homeless shelters for women and families with children.

From 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. at Shuman HeartHouse, 600 E. Franklin St., Monterey, you can get drive-through take-out meals featuring clam chowder from Old Fisherman's Grotto and The Fish Hopper.

Meals include chowder, sourdough bread, salad and brownies. Prices are \$40 for a 16-ounce portion and \$75 for a 32-ounce portion. Place an order at chservices.org/soup or take your chances in person while supplies last.

Proceeds benefit Shuman HeartHouse and Casa de Noche Buena, the county's sole shelters dedicated to women and families experiencing homelessness.

“Souper Saturday is a simple, feel-good way to show up for our friends and neighbors who need us most,” said Robin McCrae, chief executive officer of Community Human Services.

“Every order helps us keep the doors open at Shuman HeartHouse and Casa de Noche Buena.”

Community Human Services provides mental health, substance abuse and homelessness services, and Gathering for Women operates a walk-in center offering resources and support for homeless women.

ARTIST*From page 23A*

her slumber.

“I remember being frightened and my mom saying, ‘It's all right, darling. They're boozing because Bob Dylan brought out an electric guitar,’” she recounted with a laugh.

Lindem's father introduced her to painting, buying her a “kiddie set” of watercolors and taking her along on Saturday-morning excursions to paint the flowers at a nearby farm.

“I loved those times because I had him all to myself,” she said of her father, a design engineer. “My dad was a talented painter, and I really think he would've preferred being just an artist.”

Lindem spent a year at London's Goldsmiths School of Art, then was accepted to the fine art painting department at Maidstone College of Art in Kent, where she studied under contemporary giants of British painting — landscape artist Bill Bowyer, still-life specialist Peter Morell and impressionist Fred Cuming, who became her tutor.

“Fred Cuming ended up being one of the British greats, in my book ... and in a lot of people's books,” she said of the celebrated landscape artist.

Finish it

Her college years instilled many of her beliefs about the artistic process, honed her skill for painting quickly before the light changes, and reinforced her preference to paint from life.

“We were taught to finish our paintings on the spot — we never brought anything inside. And the idea of painting anything from a photograph ... that never came up,” she said.

University art students were granted permission to practice by copying the paintings of famous artists at London's historic Courtauld Institute Gallery — home of Édouard Manet's “A Bar at the

Folies-Bergère.” Vincent van Gogh's “Self-Portrait with Bandaged Ear,” and other masterpieces.

After college, Lindem returned to the United States, where she raised two sons. Her firstborn is an attorney, and his brother is in medical school. She also is a two-time grandmother. And she enjoyed a 16-year career as an educator, teaching math and science to middle-schoolers, and art in junior college.

In the 1990s, Lindem met and married Garrett Henry — a dermatologist, now semi-retired — and decided to focus full time on her art.

In 2010, she and her husband became Carmel residents, fulfilling her longtime dream.

‘Oh, yes ... it's blue!’

“My great-aunt used to come here in the 1940s, so I knew about this place. But when I first visited Carmel in the 1990s, I knew I wanted to live here someday,” said Lindem, who keeps a second home in Sedona, Ariz. — another plein air paradise.

“When I wake up every morning in this wonderful place, all I want to do is go out and paint,” she said. “I look up at the sky and say, ‘Oh, yes ... it's blue!’”

Lindem's ongoing art education has included workshops with well-known American painters, including Matt Smith, Ned Jacob, Skip Whitcomb, Dan Young, Randall Sexton, Thomas Kitts, Ray Roberts and Robert Lemler.

Her portfolio is populated with picturesque landscapes and seascapes of Carmel Lagoon, China Cove, Carmel Beach, Cypress Point, Rocky Point, Big Sur and Mission Ranch. She has also depicted local landmarks like La Bicyclette in Carmel and Monterey's Fisherman's Wharf, along with favorite vistas near her Arizona home.

View her paintings at lauralindem.com or nancydodsgallery.com, or on exhibit at the Nancy Dodds Gallery (Seventh and San Carlos).

Dennis Taylor is a professional freelance writer in Monterey County. Contact him at scribelaureate@gmail.com.

February 12-15, 2026

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CIRCULATION: 43,500 (INCLUDED ONLINE AND IN PRINT)

PENINSULA*From page 23A*

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